## Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 **(Currently Amended)** A device, having a master function for managing at least one slave device, for use in a network system in which a master device manages the at least one slave device, and the master device is allowed to shift a managing function thereof to one of the at least one slave device, the device comprising:

an own device information managing section operable to manage own device information of the device, which includes at least predetermined information, regarding a state change of the device;

an other device information managing section operable to manage other device information regarding at least one other device connected to the network system, the other device information including at least availability of the master function;

a schedule information managing section operable to manage schedule information indicative of master device candidates by a plurality of segments of at least time of day or season;

a device information processing section operable, when the device operates as the master device, to specify, at a predetermined time, a slave device from among a plurality of slave devices which are the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of at least time of day or season corresponding to the predetermined time based on the other device information, and operable to obtain predetermined information regarding a state change of the specified slave device from the specified slave device; and

a switch controlling section operable to compare the predetermined information regarding the state change of the specified slave device obtained by the device information processing section with the predetermined information regarding the state change of the device included in the own device information, and operable, when the state change of the specified slave device is smaller than the state change of the device, to switch ~~between~~ operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform a master operation operated by the device and causing the device to perform a slave operation operated by the specified slave device.

Claim 2 **(Canceled)**

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Claim 3 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 1, wherein

the predetermined time is a time when a change occurs to the own device information of the device managed by the own device information managing section.

Claim 4 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 3, wherein

the change of the own device information of the device is a reduction in a remaining amount of battery life.

Claim 5 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 3, wherein

the change of the own device information of the device is a reduction in communication quality.

Claims 6-12 **(Canceled)**

Claim 13 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 1, wherein

the switch controlling section transmits the other device information managed by the other device information managing section to the specified slave device.

Claim 14 **(Currently Amended)** A master/slave switching method to be performed on a device currently performing a slave operation by a device currently performing a master operation, the method comprising:

managing schedule information indicative of master device candidates by a plurality of segments of at least time of day or season;

specifying, at a predetermined time, a slave device from among a plurality of slave devices which are the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of at least time of day or season corresponding to the predetermined time based on the other device information including at least availability of a master function of other devices connected to a network;

obtaining predetermined information regarding a state change of the specified slave device from the specified slave device;

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comparing the predetermined information regarding the state change of the specified slave device obtained in the obtaining of the predetermined information with predetermined information regarding a state change of the device included in own device information of the device currently performing the master ~~operation,~~ operation; and

switching, when the state change of the specified slave device is smaller than the state change of the device, ~~between~~ operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform the master operation operated by the device and causing the device to perform the ~~a~~ slave operation operated by the specified slave device.

Claim 15 **(Currently Amended)** A computer-readable medium having a computer program stored thereon for causing a device currently performing a master operation to perform a method of performing a master/slave switching process on a device currently performing a slave operation, the computer program comprising:

matching schedule information indicative of master device candidates by a plurality of segments of at least time of day or season;

specifying, at a predetermined time, a slave device from among a plurality of slave devices which are the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of at least time of day or season corresponding to the predetermined time based on other device information including at least availability of a master function of other devices connected to a network;

obtaining predetermined information regarding a state change of the specified slave device from the specified slave device;

comparing the predetermined information regarding the state change of the specified slave device obtained in the obtaining of the predetermined information with predetermined information regarding a state change of the device indicated in own device information of the device currently performing the master operation; and

switching, when the state change of the specified slave device is smaller than the state change of the device, ~~between~~ operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform the master operation operate by the device and causing the device to perform the ~~a~~ slave operation operated by the specified slave device.

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Claim 16 **(Currently Amended)** An integrated circuit for use in a device, having a master function for managing at least one slave device, the device being used in a network system in which a master device manages the at least one slave device, and the master device is allowed to shift a managing function thereof to one of the at least one slave device, the integrated circuit comprising:

an own device information managing section operable to manage own device information, which includes at least predetermined information, regarding a state change of a device including the integrated circuit;

an other device information managing section operable to manage other device information regarding at least one other device connected to the network system, the other device information including at least availability of the master function;

a schedule information managing section operable to manage schedule information indicative of master device candidates by a plurality of segments of at least time of day or season;

a device information processing section operable, when the device operates as the master device, to specify, at a predetermined time, a slave device from among a plurality of slave devices which are the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of at least time of day or season corresponding to the predetermined time based on the other device information, and operable to obtain predetermined information regarding a state change of the specified slave device from the specified slave device; and

a switch controlling section operable to compare the predetermined information regarding the state change of the specified slave device obtained by the device information processing section with the predetermined information regarding the state change of the device included in the own device information, and operable, when the state change of the specified slave device is smaller than the state change of the device, to switch ~~between~~ operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform a master operation operated by the device and causing the device to perform a slave operation operated by the specified slave device.

Claim 17 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 1, wherein

the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of time of day is at least one device other than a device which is likely to be frequently used in the segment of the time of day.

Claim 18 **(Previously Presented)** The device according to claim 1, wherein

the master device candidates indicated by the schedule information in a segment of season is at least one device other than a device which is likely to be frequently used in the segment of season.